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THE  
UNREASONABLENESS  
Of Attempting the  
Conversion of a Papist,  
UPON THE  
Bishop of *Bangor*'s Principles,  
Farther Asserted.

In Answer to *Silvius*'s Defence of  
a Dialogue between a Papist  
and a Protestant.

With a Reply to some particular  
Objections.

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СЕВЕРНАЯ ОРАНЖИ

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THE  
UNREASONABLENESS  
Of Attempting the Conversion  
of a PAPIST, &c.



S I look upon every Branch of the Controversy now on foot with the Bishop of Bangor and his Friends, to be worthy the Consideration of a Christian, I will not permit any part which I have born in it to suffer, for want of that Justice which I am capable of doing it. And it is upon this account that I think my self obliged to spend a few Observations upon *Silvius's late Defence*, &c. It concerns a *Dialogue* between a *Papist* and a *Protestant*, which was given us at first in his *Letter* to the Reverend Dr. *Sherlock*, and of which I took some notice in the *Preface* to my *Appeal*. To this he has added several *Remarks* and *Observations* upon my *Manner* of *Writing* and *Reasoning*. These are the two Parts of the Book, in which I do not purpose to examine every Paragraph, because I think there is no need of it. I shall only

Select the most material Passages under each Head.

At his very first setting out, he shews us how much he has profited by a great Example ; for he begins with *complaining* ; and his Complaint is, that I have used him *uncivilly* ; a Charge which I think I have not deserved from him. But not to trouble the Reader with such personal Matters as these, I shall go directly to his Reasoning, and if we can agree in the main Controversy, the Differences in point of *Ceremony* will, 'tis to be hoped, in due time be adjusted.

The Question is this, and this only, whether supposing the Truth of what the Bishop of Bangor has taught concerning the *Availableness of Sincerity*, there is any *Reason to attempt the Conversion of a sincere Papist*. Applying my self to *Silvius* upon this Point, I remarked in the first place, that in his way of stating the Case, he had made it to relate to the *Possibility of Converting a Papist* ; and this gave me occasion to say (which I perceive is matter of great Offence to him) that it was very seldom his good Fortune to hit upon the true Point. *Silvius*, tho' (as it should seem) he is not apt to (b) reckon his *MISTAKES in the number of his WOES*, is yet so loath to be mistaken here, that he insists upon it that this is one part of the Question. But why so ? Did the Dean of Chichester, from whom the Objection was taken, state it in this manner ? Did, he ever say, that the Conversion of a *Papist* was *impossible* upon his Lordship's Principles ? Why no ; it is granted

(a) p. 4. (b) p. 32. (c) p. 4.

that

that (d) expressly he did not. But I had reason (says *Silvius*) to suppose that he might be aware of this Difficulty, i. e. (if he had a mind to speak to the purpose) I had reason to suppose that this Objection, tho' not expressed, was virtually intended by the Dean. And now, pray hear the Reason. Did not Dr. Sherlock represent the Papist as fully perswad'd, that on the Bishop's Principle he could reap no Advantages from a Change of his Religion? And must not such a Perswasion, while he continued in it, render it morally impossible to convert him? Can it be imagined that any Man would give himself the trouble of attending to a long train of Arguments, from which (however they might happen to work upon him) he expected not the least Benefit? The Case you see is thus far altered already, that from Impossible (Absolutely) we are come to Impossible Morally, which are different things. But I shall not insist upon this, but will suppose the meaning of the Question to be, whether the Dean intended to object, that upon the Bishop's Principle, the Conversion of a Papist is morally impossible. *Silvius* would fain have us believe that he did; and how does he prove it? Why not (as one would have expected) by producing any words of the Dean, that have a tendency to shew it, but by laying down certain Conclusions of his own, by which, as he thinks, it appears that the Dean ought to have objected, that the Conversion of a Papist is morally impossible upon the Bishop's Principles. This is manifestly of no weight, supposing that the Inference were just; but if there be any Truth in what the Bi-

*Bishop* and *Silvius* have both of them said, it is certainly wrong. For thus it stands: Because a sincere *Papist* is fully perswaded that he can reap no Advantage from the Change of his Religion, therefore he will not attend to such Arguments as are offered for his Conviction; and therefore it is morally impossible to convert him. But doth not the Bishop of Bangor say, with some Indignation against those who (as he fancied) had supposed the contrary, that his Doctrine doth not make it excusable in Men to guard against all future Light? And hath not *Silvius* himself replied to his *Papist*, whom he had represented as guarding against all future Light; *However sincere you may have been till now, you must quit your Pretensions to Sincerity for the future, if you slight my Arguments, and reject my Endeavours to inform and convince you?* If then it be inconsistent with Sincerity, that a Man refuses to listen to such Arguments as are offered for his Conviction; how is it consistent to say, that the Conversion of a *Papist* (supposed to be Sincere) is morally impossible, because he will not attend to such Arguments as are offered for his Conviction? *Silvius* pretends indeed that as to a Sense of any Obligation to submit to so much Trouble, that is likewise out of the Supposition. But by whose means, I pray? Why, by his own; who has himself arbitrarily put it out of the Supposition, purely to make room for putting something into the Question, which the Question has nothing to do with. But I must needs demand it back again. The Supposition is about a Sincere *Papist*: If then (as you say) Sincerity supposes a Sense of this Obligation you speak of, it is plain that a Sense of this Obligation is not out of the Supposition, but in the Supposition. Nor does it at all alter the Case, that the *Papist* is supposed ful-

*ly persuaded that he can reap no Advantage from the Change of his Religion.* For that a Papist is in as good a Condition whilst a Papist, as he would be in if he were a Protestant, the Question supposes to be owing to his Sincerity ; and therefore tho' he can reap no Advantage by his Conversion, he will still be oblig'd to attend to such Arguments as shall be offer'd in order to his Conversion. That a Person indeed should be obliged to the use of Means, without any Prospect of bettering his Condition, supposing that he succeeds in the use of those Means, is a thing not easy to be accounted for, and I shall leave it to the Consideration of the Bishop and his Friends, who are the only Persons concerned in resolving the Difficulty. In particular I must recommend it to *Silvius*, who in his Dialogue has raised the Objection himself, and then very gallantly turn'd his back upon it. But I am sorry to find that the Case is so bad with him, as that he should be forced, in order to shew that he had hit upon one true Point, to have recourse to such Reasoning as (if it proves any thing) proves that he has been widely mistaken in another of much greater Consequence. He has reason, I confess, to wish either that my Eyes were pulled out of my Head, or that he had a better Memory.

I have mentioned this, not for any weight that there is in it, as to the main Point between us, but to shew the Reader what Pains some Men will be at, lest they should have no fault to find with what an Adversary doth say, to lay to his Charge that which he doth not. I now proceed to the true State of the Question, which, as (I said before) is this, whether it be reasonable to attempt the Conversion of a Sincere Papist upon his Lordship's Principle. The Reason assigned why it

it is not reasonable, was, that if you should convert a Papist (a very plain Argument by the way, that the Dean supposed it possible to convert a Papist) from his Errors, you could not according to his Lordship's Principle make his *Condition* before God the better ; but if you should not convert him you might possibly make it worse. Upon this *Silvius* joined Issue, and undertook to prove, that the Converting a Papist was not a fruitless piece of Work, but that it might be done to very good Purpose, and actually would be so, wherever it should succeed. And thus he began :

Truth is a real Good ; for Truth will be one of the principal Enjoyments of the Blessed hereafter : And having upon this latter Clause of the Assertion charged *Silvius* with saying he knew not what ; forasmuch as the Scriptures have told us that the Happiness of Heaven consists in the Participation of the Happiness of God, which is a great deal more than SIMPLY the Enjoyment of TRUTH ; he in return is pleased to charge me with Impertinence, in not observing that he (e) did not make the Happiness of Heaven to consist WHOLLY in the Enjoyment of TRUTH, nor say that it was THE PRINCIPAL Enjoyment of Heaven, but only ONE of its PRINCIPAL Enjoyments. I shall content my self barely to lay before the Reader the true Scope and Tendency of my Answer (which I verily thought there was no occasion for me largely to insist upon) and then leave him, and (if he pleases) *Silvius* once more to consider of the Impertinency of it. Now the Argument is this : That since weare to take our Notions of the Happiness of Heaven from the Scripture, wherein only the Knowledge of it is

revealed ; and since the *Scripture* has in general only inform'd us, that the *Happiness* of *Heaven* consists in the *Participation* of the *Divine Happiness*, 'tis saying, we know not what, when we take upon our selves to define particularly in what this Happiness does more or less principally consist. *Silvius* very well observes that the *Participation* of the *Divine Happiness* comprehends other *Enjoyments*, besides that of *TRUTH*. Does he know what those other *Enjoyments* are ? If he does not, how does he know which of them is greater, and which less ? Or how is it possible that we should understand our selves, when we presume to state the Difference in Point of *Excellency* between those things which *Eye* hath not seen, nor *Ear* heard, nor hath it entered into the *Heart* of *Man* to conceive ? The Argument you see concludes not thus ; because the *Participation* of *Divine Happiness* comprehends other *Enjoyments*, besides that of *Truth*, therefore *Truth* cannot be one of the principal *Enjoyments* of the *Blessed* : which is the Inference which *Silvius* has fixed upon me, because (I suppose) it is a ridiculous one. But it concludes thus : Because the *Participation* of *Divine Happiness* comprehends other *Enjoyments* besides that of *Truth*, and you know not the *Particulars* of that *Happiness* ; therefore you cannot be sure which are the *Principal*, and consequently, to say that *Truth* is one of the *Principal*, is to say you know not what. If *Silvius* does not like this Answer, I must freely confess that I have no better for him. He, it seems expected that I should have proved, that the *Enjoyment* of *Truth* is not one of the *Principal Enjoyments* of the *Blessed* hereafter, i. e. he expected that I too should have said, I knew not what. I do assure *Silvius*, if this will satisfy him, that for ought I know, *Truth* may be one of the *Principal Enjoyments* of

the Blessed ; but then he must take this along with him, that for ought he knows it may be one of the least. And if he will be contented to sit down and joyn with me in confessing each of us our own *Ignorance* in this Particular, well and good. But, if not, I shall very contentedly leave him to be wise by himself, thinking it much more decent in me to rest satisfyed with that general and imperfect Knowledge which the Scripture affordeth, than to intrude into those things which I have not seen. Archbishop Tillotson, 'tis true, has mentioned the *Perfection* of our Knowledge as one of the chief *Ingredients* of the *Happiness* of *Heaven*; and *Silvius* hopes that I will not charge him with saying he knew not what. No ; there is a Decency due to the Name of that great Man, which *Silvius* must shew us who he is, before he can make any just Pretensions to. But this I will venture to say, that he who expects the same Exactness in a *Practical Discourse* from the Pulpit, that he looks for in a *Theological Dispute*, seems to have no good Notion of the one or the other ; and that had the Archbishop been pressed with this Question, whether among the Numberless and *Ineffable* Joys of that Place, he could certainly say which are the *Principal* ; I make no doubt but he would have acknowledged that it was too hard for him. Besides, he only says that the *Perfection* of our Knowledge is one of the chief *Ingredients* of this *Happiness*, so far as the Scripture hath thought fit to reveal it to us. He hath not defined, nor ought *Silvius* to presume to define, whether those which the Scripture hath revealed, be or be not the *Principal*.

But to proceed ; To shew that *Truth* was a real Good, *Silvius* observed, that even in this Life it brought Pleasure and Content to the Mind of Man. This was nothing to the Purpose ; the Question relating

relating not to the Difference between a *Papist* and a *Protestant* in this Life, but in the Life to come. However, in going along, I just took notice that *Truth* brought as much Pleasure to the Mind, as *Falhood*, under the Appearance of *Truth*, and no more. Upon this *Silvius* hath treated his Readers with about five Pages of *Speculation*, the bottom of which I must ingenuously confess, I am not *Philosopher* enough to reach. The Point is this ; What difference is there, as to the *Pleasure* which the Mind receives, whether a Man holds the *Truth*, or whether he holds a *Falhood*, which he most firmly believes to be *Truth*? And surely there can be no need to go to *Lock*, or *Mal-branche*, or *Silvius*, to find an Answer ; for the Difference at the very first sight appears to be nothing at all. I say it again, and *Silvius* may quarrel with the Expression as long as he is disposed to do it) that the Mind receives *Pleasure*, not from the Real abstracted Nature of things, but from the Relation which they bear to it self. i. e. that the *Pleasure* arises not from what things really are in themselves, but from what they appear to us to be, or from the manner in which we are moved or affected by them. In *Corporeal Perception* the thing is plain and undeniably. Every one knows that the Disposition of our Bodily Organs to receive such or such a Modification from the Action or Impression of External Objects, is the Foundation of this Perception. Thus *Honey*, by affecting the Organs of Taste in a peculiar manner, raises that *Sensation* which we call *Sweetness*; and *Gall* by affecting them in a different manner, raises that which we call *Bitterness*; and these Effects will always be the same, so long as the Organs are rightly disposed. But if the Organs should be so much indisposed, as to be alike Affected, or Modified upon the Impression of both

these Objects, would it not be the same thing (as to the Matter of Pleasure) whether you should eat Honey, or whether you should eat Gall ? Or, if it were so, that the Organs should receive the same Modification from the Application of Honey, that in a well disposed state they would receive from the Application of Gall, and vice versa, would not the latter be pleasant, and the former disagreeable ? Apply this now to the Case before us. Truth is a certain Agreement or Proportion between one thing and another ; and the Pleasure of Truth arises from the Perception of this Agreement. When the Mind is rightly disposed, and apprehends things as they really are in themselves, this Perception cannot be but where the Agreement is ; but when thro' an Indisposition of its Faculties it apprehends things otherwise than they are, there, will then be a Perception of an Agreement, where indeed there is no Agreement ; and this is the Precise and formal Notion of Error. As therefore in the other Case it matters not of what sort, or how disposed the External Objects are in themselves, provided our Bodily Organs receive from them that peculiar Modification which creates sensible Pleasure ; so in the present Case, neither doth it signify of what sort the Internal Objects are in themselves, provided there be that Perception of an Agreement between them, which is the Foundation of Rational Pleasure. For every Effect being proportionable to its Cause, 'tis plain that whenever there is the same Perception, (whether it arises from a real Cause or no) there must be also the same Pleasure. Silvius indeed tells us, that Truth (f) gratifies the Understanding with a Perception naturally pleasant, which Percep-

(f) p. 8

tion

tion is altogether wanting in Error. I would have thanked him if he would have told us what that Perception is. For my own part I can find no Perception which Truth gratifies the Mind with, besides that which I have now mentioned, viz. The Perception of an Agreement between one thing and another ; nor can I discern any other Pleasure in simple Truth, but what arises from hence. And is there not the same Perception in Error ? Why no ; Silvius seems to be of Opinion that there is not ; For an Imaginary Perception (says he) is indeed no Perception at all. If I could do it without offending him, I would once more tell him, that he knows not what he says. For what ? Does he mean that the Perception of a thing which is Imaginary, i. e. which hath no real Existence, is no Perception ? This is a Contradiction in Terms. Or by an Imaginary Perception, does he mean that which the Mind imagines only it hath a Perception of, but hath no Preception of ? This is not Sense. For what is Imagination but Perception ? If I imagine, i. e. if my Mind apprehends that the three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two right ones, I have then a Perception of this Equality ; and so I have too if I apprehend them to be equal to two right ones and a half. In both these Cases there is a Perception of an Agreement between one thing and another ; only in the one Case there is a Perception of an Agreement, where indeed there is no Agreement, and in the other the Perception of an Agreement where there is an Agreement ; in the one Case the Perception arises from a right use, and in the other from an Indisposition of my Faculties. But tho' the Causes differ, the Perception is still the same ; just as the Perception is the same, whether a Man looks on a yellow Object, or whether he has the Jaundice.— But why, you'll ask, this serious Trifling ? Why do

do I thus gravely prove what the *Experience* of every one who has been convinced of an Error, will satisfy him about? Why only to return *Silvius* his Civility, and satisfy him in his own way, by opposing *Philosophy* (in the shortest manner I could think of) against *Philosophy*. This I confess is the farthest that my Metaphysicks will carry me; if *Silvius* likes them well enough to make them *his own*, he is welcome, and then he will be able to answer himself in every particular. But if not, and all this be no better than (g) *High Treason against the Truth*, the Case, I fear, will always go so bad with me, that there will be no way of saving me but by an *Act of Grace*.

But what avail such *Refinements* as these, unless it could be shewn that a *Sincere Papist* will not enjoy as much *Truth* hereafter as a *Sincere Protestant*? Will he then, or will he not? Why (b) *Ceteris paribus* (says *Silvius*) it seems not probable that he will. Modestly spoken; but the Reason. Why because his *Erroneous Belief* having fettered his *Mind*, and cramped his *Capacity* in some measure, he is hereby thrown back as it were, or at least hindered from making such a *Proficiency* as he otherwise might have done. Does not the Point clear up apace! Cramped, fettered, thrown back as it were, or at least hinder'd! *Silvius* I perceive is very much Cramped and Fettered, thrown back, or hindered in explaining himself. For what does all this, in plain *English* amount to? Why only to this, viz. That a Man under an erroneous Belief cannot make such a *Proficiency* (in *Knowledge* I suppose) as a Man under a true Belief. A worthy Reason! But where, when it is, that a *Sincere*

(g) P. 10. (b) P. 12.

here Papist cannot make this Proficiency ? Here or hereafter ? If you say here, you say nothing to the Purpose ; and if hereafter, I ask once more, Is it necessary that a Papist shoud carry his Errors with him into another World ? No, says Silvius; It is not to be doubted but his Religious Errors will be done away, and perhaps all others : But (I pray mind it) still if his Capacity has been checked or straitned in this World, in all likelihood it will be some disadvantage to him in the next. Tho' the Degres of the Saints Happiness hereafter will chiefly be measured out by the Rule of their moral Improvements, yet a good deal may depend upon their Intellectual. Still you see we are straitned. He is not unwilling to allow, that all Errors will be done away in another World ; but if you ask whether these Cramps and Fetters being removed, the Mind will not be in as good a Capacity for the Enjoyment of Truth, as it would have been had it never erred ; no by no means ; and if you want to know the Reason for it, it is, in all likelihood it will not be so ; and possibly it may not be so ! If Silvius would accept of any good Advice from me, it should be to be silent, when he cannot speak to the Purpose. Who does not see by all this Coldness and Hesitation, that he has a Work upon his Hands which he cannot tell what to do with ? I would by no means hereupon (as I perceive he is apt to do) have him fall into a Passion with his Understanding. His Understanding is not to blame, but his Curiosity, which leads him to such Enquiries as human Knowledge is not able to reach. That Errors hinder our Improvements in Knowledge in this Life, is I think more than enough evident. But what effect will they have upon us in a Life to come ; What will be the Condition of disembodied and glorified Spirits ; what the Proportion of their Knowledge with Respect to one another ; and

and upon what *Basis* this *Proportion* is founded ; these are Points which *Infinite Wisdom* alone can comprehend, and which therefore I will have no hand in determining, either one way or the other. But why do I say I will not, when, if *Silvius* may be believed, I have determined already ? I have said, it seems, that *to imagine that the different States of Men in a Life to come, should not be adapted to their different Capacities, is to ascribe Weakness to the All-wise God.* The words I own ; but methinks *Silvius* should for his own sake have forborn to mention them, since I cannot answer the Objection without repeating a Mistake of his, one of the weakest I believe that ever dropt from the Pen of any Writer. The Case was this : *Silvius* had laid it down for Truth, that *Two Christians may be supposed equally rewarded, and yet not equally happy* ; which he endeavoured to support by this Instance, viz. That of *Two Persons* vested, each of them with the Government of *Ten Cities* (and so equally rewarded) *one might be more happy than the other, as being better qualified for so great a Post.* My Answer to this strange Assertion was intended to shew, that the Instance was by no means parallel ; for that every Man's State in a *Life to come* would certainly be *adapted to his Capacity*, (i. e. no Man should be put into a *Post* which he should not be qualified to fill) and that *to suppose the contrary, was to ascribe Weakness to the All-wise God.* And what is all this now to the Business in hand ? What tendency has this to maintain, that the Capacities of Men for greater Degrees of Glory in a *Life to come*, will in any Measure depend upon the *Improvements* of their *Knowledge* in this ? *Silvius* frequently puts me in mind of the *Pleasure* I receive from my *Mistakes* ; I wish he does not find much more Pleasure in his Misrepresentations.

One thing I observed under this Head, which *Silvius* has thought fit to take no notice of, viz. That his Argument relating only to *Simple* or *Abstracted Truth*, is as good to prove that it will redound to the *Spiritual Advantage of a Papist*, to be instructed in the *Mathematicks*, as to be instructed in the *Doctrines of Religion*. I will now beg leave to add, that it is much better. For here is no hazard of raising *Doubts* and *Scruples*, and certainly, if you consider merely the extent of *Knowledge*, a Man may receive greater *Improvements* from the *Theorems of Euclid*, than he can from the *Doctrines*, and *Precepts* of the *Gospel*; or at least more than he can from being set right in his *Notions* about the *Invocation of Saints*, *Purgatory*, *Transubstantiation*, and the like. The Reason extends it self proportionably to all Arts and Sciences, as may very easily be thus demonstrated. Every *Art or Science* (i) implies an *Acquisition of Knowledge*; and every *Acquisition of Knowledge* proportionably improves and augments a *Man's Capacity*; and every *Advantage of Capacity* proportionably qualifies a *Man* for a larger *Enjoyment of Truth*; and so on. This is the *Golden Chain*! And is it not, think you, a very notable way of solving the present *Difficulty*, about *Converting a Papist*, to have recourse to an Argument which makes it every whit as reasonable to put him out to an *Artificer* to learn a *Trade*, as to send him to a *Divine* for *Instruction*? I wish *Silvius* would put his own *Rules in Practice*, and try to edify Mankind, by teaching *Simple Truths*. Let them be as *simple* as he pleases, he will, so far

(i) P. 12.

as I am able to judge, do more good by them, than he is likely to do by his *Divinity*.

Here ends the Argument, which turns upon the *Pleasure and Advantage of Truth in general*; what follows under this Head, is for the most part intended to shew, that *Popery* is a great hindrance to the *Moral Improvements of Men*, and consequently that upon this Account the *Conversion* of a *Papist* must redound to his *Spiritual Advantage*. Those who have a mind to see the Arguments drawn out in *Mood and Figure*, may consult *Silvius*; I shall only set down the Substance of them, which is as follows, viz.

1. The *Church of Rome* (k) deprives its *Members* of the *Use of the Scriptures*, which are the *Principal Means of Knowledge and Instruction*.

2. It (l) inflicts severer Penalties on supposed false *Doctrines*, than notorious *Immoralities*, and consequently corrupts the *Minds and Judgments* of its *Members*.

3. It (m) Teaches and Practices the *Invocation of Saints*, which hinders the *Love of God* and *true Devotion*.

4. It (n) enjoys such *Rites and Ceremonies* as naturally tend to the *Prejudice and Disturbance* of *Divine Worship*, which throws a great *Obstacle* in the *Way of Mens Spiritual Improvements*.

5. It (o) teaches and practices *Persecution*, which hinders *Love and Charity*.

These are the Arguments, by which, if *Silvius* proposes to shew that the *Religion of Papists* is a *Method* not so well adapted and fitted to lead Men to the Practice of *Vertue and Piety*, as the *Religion*

(k) P. 18. (l) P. 19. (m) Ibid. and p. 14. 15. 16.  
(n) P. 20. (o) P. 21.

of Protestants, he is in a very safe and easy way. But if he means to prove the *Nature of Popery* to be such, as that there is no room, or Possibility for a Papist, how Sincere and Honest soever he be, to make such *Moral Improvements* as shall qualify him for as great a *Degree of Happiness* hereafter, (so far I mean as mere Moral Improvements are considered in the Case) as a Protestant may qualify himself for : If this, I say, be his Meaning, (which is the Point in question) in my humble Opinion he is only Disputing against Matter of Fact. For the clearing of this Point, I beg it may be considered, what sort of *Moral Improvements* those are which may be supposed to Qualify, or Capacitate Men for greater Degrees of Happiness hereafter. They who talk sensibly upon the Subject, say thus ; That forasmuch as all Happiness consists in the *Agreement*, or due Proportion between the *Subject* and the *Object* ; therefore those must be qualified for the greatest Degrees of Happiness in Heaven, whose Souls are most of all disposed to taste and relish that sort of Pleasure, in which the Happiness of Heaven does consist. Now the *Pleasures of Heaven* are of a Pure, Spiritual Nature, most opposite to those which arise from the Gratification of our Sensual Appetites ; and consequently by how much the more cool a Man is in his Affections towards Earthly Things ; by how much the more he divests himself, as it were, of Flesh and Blood ; by how much the more he loves God, delights in the Prospect of, and longs after the Enjoyment of his Happiness ; by so much the greater Degrees of that Happiness he is qualify'd for. In a word, the whole Compass of *Moral Qualifications*, consider'd as proper to capacitate us for greater Glories, will (so far as we at present can judge any thing of the Matter) fall under that one complex

Notion, *Heavenly-mindedness*. And let me then ask of *Silvius*; Is all the Piety which has ever been observed in the Church of Rome, mere *out-side Formality*? And have we not had as great Examples of *Heavenly-mindedness* in that Communion, as we have ever had in any Communion among *Protestants*? Let it not be thought that I am pleading the Cause of *Popery*; but I hope I may without Offence, mention those *Vertues* which have shone forth in some of its Members, and appeal to the Examples of such as an Evidence, how much is practicable, even under all its Corruptions, by those whom this Question concerns, truly *Sincere* and *Upright Men*. There have been those then among them, as well as among our selves, of whom it might have been said, that in *Labours* they were more abundant, in *Perils* often, in *Weariness and Painfulness*, in *Watchings* often, in *Cold*, and in *Nakedness*. There have been those who thro' the *Vigour* of a *Lively Faith*, the *Love of God*, and the *Contemplation* of those *Glories* which shall hereafter be revealed, have raised themselves above this World, and had their *Conversation in Heaven*, whilst they were *Strangers here upon Earth*. And what weight can the Subtleties of Men have against such Instances as these? Do they tell us, and would they Logically prove to us, what a *Sincere Papist* CANNOT do? We shew them by a much more easy and certain way, that so far as we are capable of judging from what has often been experienced, what they say cannot be done, has been done. The Truth indeed seems to be this; That tho' these *Doctrines* and *Practices* of the Church of Rome, do in general tend to corrupt Men's Minds, and in Fact, very frequently hinder the *Moral Improvements* of its Members; yet that this Effect is not necessary and unavoidable; and therefore it cannot reach

the

the Behaviour of those among them who are *Sincere* and *Upright*, so as to render them less qualify'd (so far as mere *Morality* is a Qualification) for the Rewards of a Life to come. If this Effect be not *necessary*, it may then by a due Care be prevented : Now *Sincerity* supposeth this Care ; a *Sincere Man*, in the present Question, being one who is supposed to be under such a Sense of his *Duty*, and such Apprehensions of the Rewards of a Life to come, as to apply his best and utmost Endeavour, both to know the Will of God, and to live obediently thereto. This may be applied not only to *Papists*, but to *Sincere Persons* in many other (however Erroneous) *Seets of Religion*. And what has *Silvius* (for he foresaw the Objection) done to show the contrary ? Why according to custom he tells us, that (p) *SINCERE Men MAY BE in some measure seduced, and deluded by such means*—*PERHAPS they may baffle great Degrees of Care and Industry.* That (q) *it CANNOT BE EXPECTED that Sincerity should be able to withstand entirely.*—That it (r) *IS NOT IN THE POWER of any private PAPIST, however SINCERE, wholly to prevent*—That (s) *IN ALL PROBABILITY it may be weakened*—*IN ALL LIKELIHOOD it will be stopped and with-held.* This is all that I can any where find to the Purpose ; and the whole amounts to thus much, and no more, viz. That a truly *Sincere* and *Upright Heart* will not prevent these *Evil Effects*, because—it will not ; or because perhaps, possibly, probably, and in all likelihood it may not ! But let *Silvius* assign some Reason why *Sincerity* should not always act uniformly, and in a manner agreeable to its self.

(p) P. 19. (q) P. 20. (r) Ibid. (s) P. 21.

Why the same good Disposition of Mind which leads a Man with the utmost Care and Diligence to know the Will of God, should not be as effectual in regulating everypart of his Behaviour, and leading him to all possible Improvements. Or, why when a Man has used his best Endeavours to guard against these Impediments, they must nevertheless necessarily prove Stumbling-blocks to him in his way towards Moral Perfection. Let *Silvius*, I say, assign somegood Reason for either of these, and he shall be heard; but if he cannot do it, he had better keep his *Peradventures* to himself. How (*t*) we lovers of Truth may relish such sort of Arguiug, I cannot say; but certainly those who understand Sense, will not be thus imposed upon.

But the last of these Objections, relating to the Doctrine of Persecution, ought to be more particularly spoken to, because *Silvius's* Management of it seems to be somewhat extraordinary. Having put the Question (*u*) How far SINCERE Papists may be affected by it, he immediately observes, that PERSECUTION is such a flagrant Violation of the Law of Nature, that it cannot be CONSISTENT with SINCERITY; and that to a SINCERE Person nothing CAN dissolve the Obligation of loving his fellow Creatures, i. e. (for this is what he means) No Sincere Person can think himself disengaged from this Obligation. Is not this fine Reasoning! The Point is, whether a Sincere Papist may not make as great Moral Improvements as a Sincere Protestant. No, says *Silvius*, he cannot. But why? Why because the Church of Rome teacheth and practiseth Persecution. Now if you

(*t*) P. 11. (*u*) P. 21.

should think it proper to ask, whether a Sincere Papist can Teach or Practice Persecution, you have it from his own Mouth, that he can do neither. For Persecution, he tells us, is inconsistent with Sincerity; and a Sincere Man cannot but think himself obliged to love his Fellow Creatures. That is to say, a Sincere Papist is supposed to be incapacitated to make as great Moral Improvements as a Sincere Protestant; for a Reason, which he neither is, nor can be any way concerned in! He neither doth, nor can approve of Persecution, and yet he cannot improve so well, because of the Doctrine of Persecution! What Sense there is in this, let any ordinary Reader judge. But it is not without Reason taken for granted by *Silvius*, that a Man may be a Papist, and yet not hold the Doctrine of Persecution. For tho' Persecution be both Taught and Practised in the Church of Rome, 'tis yet no Article of Communion that I know of. The Governors of that Church think it not only Lawful, but their Duty to Persecute those who separate from them; but this doth not necessarily affect the Behaviour of Private Members, and if I may have leave to speak what I think, I believe that there are thousands in that Communion who no more approve of this Unchristian Method of dealing with their Fellow-Creatures, than *Silvius* or I do. This Consideration therefore is impertinently brought into the Argument. For if it be Supposed, that a Sincere Papist may, and does hold the Doctrine of Persecution, and that he is hereby unavoidably hindred from making such Moral Improvements, as he otherwise might; what is it that hinders? Why plainly not any thing which is Essential to his Profession, consider'd as a Private Person, but something which is accidental

to it. It is not merely his being a *Papist*, but his holding a *Doctrine* which he might *not* hold *consistently* with his being a *Papist*. But the Objection has not the least Colour in it ; if you say that a *Sincere Papist* cannot consistently with his *Sincerity* hold the *Doctrine of Persecution* ; which whether it be true or not, it is no Part of my Business now to inquire.

I have said as much as I think it proper for me to say, in answer to *Silvius's Objections*, and he must now give me leave to (y) hope in my turn, that what has been offered contains a *Satisfactory Answer to that Question* ; *What good can you do a Papist* (supposed to be *Sincere*) *by converting him*? If the Argument does not (which yet I conceive it does) come fully up to what I intend by it, the difference at least will appear so very *small*, that a wise Man will hardly think it a Sufficient *Ballance* against those *Difficulties* you may bring a *Papist* under, if after all your Endeavours you should not be able to convert him. But, says *Silvius*, (z) *If Popery was no disadvantage to the Professors of it*, yet there would be Sufficient Reason to endeavour their Conversion, because *Popery is a great Stumbling-Block to Atheists, Deists, Pagans &c.* How far *Popery* is an *Obstruction to the Conversion of Infidels* ; there is no need for me now to inquire. I shall only say this, that if there were any tolerable prospect of effecting a *General Conversion* from *Popery*, we should not then want Arguments to make it *Reasonable to attempt it*. But so long as there are *no* hopes of this, the Argument is manifestly of no weight : For tho' you should convert here

and there a *Papist*, yet if notwithstanding this whole Nations will continue to be *Papists* still, the Stumbling-block will be the same that it was before. Yea, but the Conversion of one single *Papist* is one step towards the accomplishing so good a Work. Without doubt ; and so is the removal of one single Stone, one step towards removing a Mountain. But if any Man in Vertue of this Reasoning hould employ his Time in fetching Stones from the *Alps*, I doubt he would be reckoned either a *Fool* or a *Madman* for his Pains.

Upon the whole then; Forasmuch as *Silvius* has called upon me (a) once more to tell him whether I think that there is any Sense in attempting to Convert a *Papist* on the *Bishop's Principle*, I do now once more tell him, that there is none. I have according to his desire given him some plain Reasons why I will not grant to him this Point ; not sollicitous whether he now thinks I have reason to say that it is too hard for him, or not. If not, I shall oblige him yet farther, being resolved to (b) take no more fruitless Pains, by resuming a Point which I cannot pretend to say any thing more satisfactory about, and which if *Silvius* could gain, it would be no advantage to the main Cause in which he is concerned. You pretend, Sir, to be a great Lover of Truth ; be pleased to attend a little, for I am now going to deal with you as such. You lay it down in the beginning of your Book, that (c) If the Doctrine of Sincerity renders the Conviction of Erroneous and Deceived Men, an impracticable thing, and even makes it absurd and unreasonable to endeavour it, it must necessarily sink under the Weight of such a Difficulty.

(a) p. 22. (b) p. 11. (c) p. 4.

This is your own Rule; and here is a very plain Confession, that if the *Difficulty* herementioned cannot be remov'd, your Case is gone. Here then I lay my Finger, and will very quickly give you as fair an Opportunity as you can desire of trying your *Ingenuity*.

In the first place then we must consider what the *Difficulty* is which the Cause requires should be removed; and this he tells us, is, that it is an *absurd and unreasonable thing* (I leave out *Impracticable*, because, as has been shewn, it is no part of the *Difficulty*) to endeavour to Convert, not merely *Papists*, but *Erroneous and Deluded Men* in general; so that the Cause must necessarily sink, if any one false Religion (for he would be understood, I suppose, to speak of *Religious Errors*) can be assigned; the Conversion of a Man from which the Bishop's *Doctrine of Sincerity* makes it *Absurd and Unreasonable to attempt*. Thus far *Silvius* speaks like a Man of Sense; for the main Point indeed is, not whether upon the Bishop's Principle, it is unreasonable to attempt to Convert a Man from *this or that* false Religion, but *indefinitely* from *any* false Religion. The *Papists* were indeed particularly mentioned by the *Dean*, because, I suppose, they first occur'd to his *Thoughts*; for 'tis evident, and *Silvius* here allows, that had he instanced in any *other* false Religion, the *Difficulty* would have been the *very same*. Now pray consider, by what sort of Arguments *Silvius* has endeavoured to shew, that it is reasonable to attempt the *Conversion* of a *Papist* upon his Lordship's Principles; and if you look back, you will find that the main Stress of the Cause is made to rest upon certain Corruptions peculiar to the *Church of Rome*, which are conceived to hinder the *Moral Improvement* of its Members. Supposing then, but not granting

ting this to be the Case, I ask of *Silvius*; Can he not conceive *Papery* stript of those *Corruptions*, and yet still to remain a *false Religion*? Or in other Words, cannot he conceive a *false Religion* so constituted as that (so far as mere *Morality* is considered) there shall be room for the *same Improvements* as under the *true*? If he can (and certainly he may) his Arguments from *Moral Improvements* will all be set aside. And if after this he can be brought to see (and I trust it will require no farther Pains to make him see) that his other Arguments are good for nothing; here then will be a *false Religion*, from which upon his Lordship's Principle you can have *no reason to endeavour to Convert a Man*, and the *Cause of Consequence* will be *lost*, by his own Confession.

It had been exactly to the same purpose, if it had been put to his Lordship: *With what Reason can your Lordship attempt the Conversion of a Deist, or a Jew, upon your Principle?* And yet here 'tis plain that *Silvius*'s Reasoning can have no place; for the *Deist*, who believes in the *Existence* and *Providence of God*, and expects a *Reward*, in *Virtue* of his *Obedience* to the *Law of Morality*, has all the encouragement in the *World* to *improve in Morality*. The same may be said of a *Jew*, who expects *Salvation* in *Virtue* of his *Obedience* to the *Law of Moses*; because the *Moral Law* is a *part* of the *Law of Moses*. And neither of these Perswasions are liable to those Objections which *Silvius* has made against *Papery*. I know well enough, that his Lordship does not care to own, that his Doctrine about *Sincerity* reaches to such; and *Silvius*, under his Lordship's Protection, now tells me, not without some very warm Reflections upon my *Honesty* and

*Modesty*, that (d) *The Bishop's Maxim relates only to professed sincere Christians*. One would think that this Gentleman meant to carry his Point merely by the dint of *Assurance*; for he offers not one word of Proof for what he says, but only very *positively asserts* it. If this be the Case, I do assure him, that whatever he may think of me, I am by no means a Match for him; but if he is willing to argue, let him go to p. 44, 45, 46, of the *Preface to my Appeal* (which he seems never yet to have read) and he may find some Employment. What his Lordship *meant to teach*, is no body's concern, that I know of but *his own*; but this I *do say*, and this so long as I have Eyes to Read, and Sense to understand, I *must say*, that his Lordship's *Maxim* includes *all Sincere Persons without Exception*; and that every one of the Arguments made use of by him to support his *Proposition*, conclude with *equal strength* in favour of *all sincere Persons*, whether *Christian*, or not *Christian*. If his Lordship will not now *justify* this, why is he not so ingenuous as to *own it*? Why doth he not *alter his Proposition*, and *retract his Reasoning*? Whenever he will be pleased to do thus much Justice to the Cause, I promise him I shall be ready to *accept his Recantation*; and I give it him under my Hand, that he shall thenceforward be pressed with no Consequences by me, but such as relate to *Sincere Christians*. But till this is done, the Charge *will*, and *ought to stand full against him*; and I must beg of his Lordship to be excused, if I cannot accept of an *I did not think on't*, on the one hand, as an equivalent to the strongest Evidence

(d) P. 25.

that either *Words* or *Arguments* can give on the other.

I shall do *Silvius* a Pleasure, perhaps, by observing, that as to this Particular, he is under the very same Circumstances with his Lordship. His Arguments, in which he hath closely followed the Bishop, stand yet uncancelled; and tho' he no where expressly extends the *Doctrine of Sincerity* beyond Christians, yet neither doth he anywhere expressly confine it to them.— But I will beg leave to put one Question more, which I am sure neither of them will find fault with; and that is, *With what Reason can you attempt to Convert a Dissenter upon his Lordship's Principles?* These are *Christians*, I hope, and amidst all the Complaints of the want of *Means*, and *Opportunities* of *Improvement* in the *Church of Rome*, I hear none about the want of them in a *Protestant Conventicle*. What good then I ask can you do to a *Dissenter* by *Converting* him? Why plainly, none at all; and if you say that there is reason to attempt his Conversion, because *Divisions* generally occasion the *Breach of Charity* among Christians; I answer, that if this be all, the end may be as well answered by *Instructing* Christians better. The *Dissenters*, I hope, want no *Charity* to the *Church of England*, tho' they think themselves oblig'd to *separate* from her. Ask them, and they will tell you so. And if we want *Charity* towards *them*, I hope we are capable of being convinced of the *Unreasonableness* of it. But whether we are or not, why, I pray, should the *Dissenters* suffer for *our want of Charity*? Why should they be disturbed in the quiet Enjoyment of their *Sincerely* embraced *Errors*, and put to the fruitless hazzard and Pains of seeking out a new Religion, merely because some ill disposed Men

Men take up unreasonable *Prejudices* against them?

When *Silvius* has considered the Case of *Dissenters*, I would desire him to take one Step more, and consider the Case of sincere *Arians* and *Socinians*. For my self, I must own that I am not without Suspicion, that this Modern Doctrine of *Sincerity* was raised to countenance these *Errors*; and if *Silvius* can shew upon his own Principles the Reasonableness and Necessity of endeavouring to Convert these Men, tho' he may not perhaps *justify* his Doctrine of *Sincerity*, yet he will undoubtedly ease it of a Weight, which, by his own Confession, if not removed, must sink it.

These are the Points which I propose to *Silvius*, considered as a *Lover of Truth*; and I may venture to stand by his own Determination, provided he really is what he pretends to be. I must now hasten to the other part of his Book, upon which, not purposing to tire my Reader, I cannot be so full and particular as I have been upon the first. But as I cannot so, to my great Comfort, I need not.

At p. 15. of my *Preface*, I cited (from Bishop *Burnet*) a Rule of *Mahomet*, That all Men, in all Religions are equally acceptable to God, if they serve him faithfully in them; which appearing to me exactly to come up to the Bishop of *Bangor's* Doctrine, I said, one would be apt to think that his Lordship transcribed it from the *Alcoran*. I used not this as an Argument, nor did I speak it to Reproach the Bishop, as *Silvius* seems to fancy. But I did it to make Men cautious upon what sort of Proofs they admitted of a Doctrine, which (as I hoped) I had sufficiently shewn, had no good ones to support it, and which was introduced by a grand Impostor, on purpose (as it should

should seem) to take Men off from any especial Regard to Christianity, and to make way for his own new Scheme. What now says *Silvius*? Why he tells me (how decently you may see, if you please) that in the first place, (e) *This is NOT the Bishop's Maxim, but a CONSEQUENCE drawn from it, which perhaps the Bishop does not see*; and in the next place, that if it be the Bishop's Maxim, 'tis MY OWN, as well as the Bishop's. The Truth of these Particulars will depend upon the Sense of *Mahomet's Maxim*; for which I shall beg leave again to refer to Bishop *Burnet*, supposing him to have been a competent Judge of the Matter, and because I have not the *Alcoran* by me to go to. Thus then he concludes the Point (*Expos.* Art. 18.) "It is therefore e-  
"nough to fix this according to the Design of  
"the Article, That it is not free to Men to chuse  
"at Pleasure what Religion they will, as if —  
"ALL Religions were ALIKE." He had been disputing all along against the *Maxim* of *Mahomet*, above laid down, and concludes you see that *all Religions* are not alike. By consequence he understood the *Maxim* of *Mahomet*, as declaring, that *all Religions* are alike. If *Silvius* wants any farther Satisfaction about the Sense of the Bishop's *Proposition*, he may go to those who are disposed to give it him. For he ought to have taken notice, that (tho' I might very well have done it) yet I do not state the Comparison barely between the *Maxim* of *Mahomet*, and the Bishop's *Proposition*; but between the *Maxim* of *Mahomet* and the Bishop's *Doctrine*. His *DOCTRINE*, I said, one would be apt to conclude, was transcribed from the *Alcoran*. Now his *Doctrine* is to be ga-

thered, not barely from his *Proposition*, but from the whole of what he hath written upon the Subject. The Bishop's *Doctrine* then, if I can understand, sets forth thus much, viz. That ALL *Sincere Persons* (for there is no Exception made) whatever Method of Religion they follow, are entitled to equal Happiness hereafter, if they be equally *Sincere*: And what is this, but in other words to say, That all *Religions* are alike? If you will call this a *Consequence*, 'tis such a *Consequence* as no *Man* can avoid seeing, who is able to see at all: But in my Judgment, it is not a *Consequence*, but the Maxim it self, expressed in a different manner. But is this my Maxim, as well as the Bishop's? Have I any where said, that all *Religions* are alike? *Silvius* upon this Occasion asks, whether I CAN blush; and takes great pleasure in repeating the Question. I have so much Charity for him, as to believe that HE can; and if one may judge by his manner of Writing, this is the Reason why he cares not to shew his Face.

After this Ruffle, *Silvius*, all of a sudden grows (f) pleased; and it is such a great rarity to find him so, that had not his Pleasure been too ill-natured, I should have been pleased too. Now the Pleasure is, that I should be Civil to the Character of a *Bishop*; which, had I not been conscious to my self, that the thing was impossible, would have raised in me a violent Suspicion, that I had somewhere or other dropt some severe words against *Episcopacy*. But upon reading the very next words, ESPECIALLY *Bishop Burnet*, I quickly perceived that this Gentleman has not yet found out the Secret of distinguishing between the Character of a *Bishop*, and the Person

(f) Ibid.

of a *Bishop*; for what difference there is between the *Episcopal Character* of Doctor *Burnet*, and the *Episcopal Character* of another Man, I profess I do not see. But I should be loath to be thought *Uncivil*, even to the *Person* of a *Bishop*; nor do I know that I have been so. If the *Bishop* of *Bangor* (for he I suppose is next at Heart) has any *Personal Failings*, the *World* knows I have never enter'd into them; and if he has laid me under a necessity of observing some things in his *Writings*, not very *favourable* to his *Personal Character*, *Silvius* knows, or *may know*, upon whom the Blame of that must fall.—But I go on; he is so well pleased with my *Encomium* upon *Bishop Burnet* (he should have said upon *Bishop Burnet's Reflection*) that he is *almost tempted to let it pass unmolested*; yet (such is the Force of *Delusion*) he could not do it without *making the following Remark*. *Bishop Burnet* (says he) *speaks with dislike of a certain Supposition*, the substance of which *Mr. Stebbing has expressly granted*.—And yet he tells us, that nothing can be more just than this *Reflection*. And for the Proof of this, *Silvius* makes HIMSELF answerable, if I find it needful, after I have compared the *Concession made*, Page 181. of my *Appeal* with the *Reflection* of *Bishop Burnet*. Why so very shy Sir? Why this News of a Discovery, and the Reader yet left in the dark? If I have in one place allowed of a *Supposition* of *Bishop Burnet's*, which I disallow in another, why were not the Passages produced to open view, and set one against the other? I guess at the Reason. *Silvius* was afraid that the *World* should be apprized that *Bishop Burnet* has spoken less favourably of *Sincerity* than I have. I shall not go about to undeceive him in this; but since he has put me upon looking out *my Mistake*, shall think

it enough to desire him to look once more ; and see if he cannot find out his own. For my own part I have diligently compared the places, and do sincerely profess to him, that I find nothing at all of any such matter as he speaks of.

We are now coming to a Matter of much greater Consequence. At p. 27. he is much disturbed that I have shewn the Danger and Inconveniences of the Bishop's Doctrine —— Surely (says he) the Question is not, Whether ill-disposed Men may not make a bad use of the Doctrine of Sincerity. —— He knows perfectly well that this Argument either proves nothing, or almost every thing. I was afraid what use would be made of my setting forth the ill Consequences of the Bishop's Doctrine, and therefore I took care expressly to guard against it, by telling the Reader that (g) the use that I intended from it, was (not to prove the Bishop's Doctrine to be false, but) ONLY to observe, that IF IT HAS no Foundation the World cannot be too well apprized of it. There are some Falshoods which it is not worth a Man's while to confute. Silvius's Book contains a great many such. But this Falshood is attended with such ill Consequences, that it ought to be confuted; and I therefore set forth these ill Consequences in order (as I said) to justify my self in undertaking to confute it. What a sad Misfortune is it, that this Gentleman, who is apt to be so angry at being told of his Mistakes, should not be able to set so much as one Step right ! —— But pray mark what follows ; There is another

(g) Pref. to my Appeal, p. 18.

Point, which tho' Mr. Stebbing has very prudently overlook'd, yet I think it highly fitting to be laid before the Reader. I mean the Dangers and Inconveniences attending the Doctrine of fixing Eternal Salvation upon TOO RIGID ORTHODOXY. Why he took not the least notice of these, is a Secret, not fit to be pry'd into.—But I shall produce them, &c. Pray now, Reader, consider what it is upon which I have fixed the Eternal Salvation of Men, i. e. (for Silvius, I perceive, must always be told of it) their Title to Eternal Salvation; and you will find it to be neither more nor less than this, viz. The Receiving, or Embracing those Doctrines concerning Salvation, which Jesus Christ came to declare, and the living Obediently to his Commandments. The former of these is what this Gentleman calls *too rigid Orthodoxy*. Be it so; yet he knows that I thought it *not too rigid*. And should I then set forth the Dangers and Inconveniences of fixing Eternal Salvation upon those Terms, upon which (as I am verily perswaded) Christ himself has fixed it? I hope in God I never shall attempt it. The Reason of this such Writers as Silvius may pry into, but it cannot be a Secret to those who have any Sense of Decency. But has Silvius done any thing to shew, that this is *too rigid Orthodoxy*? Why no; he thinks (b) it becomes him *purposely to defer the Work, in order to see whether the whole Book be not undertaken by some abler Hand*. I fear there is something else at bottom; for *Modesty* is always like it self; and since (as he confesses) this is a Point which calls for some *able Hand*, it would have taught him not to have been so *hasty* in throwing about his Consequences, lest if happily this *able Hand* should not

Come forth and do the Work at last, these *Reproaches* should fall, not upon me, but upon the *Author of the Gospel*. It will make the Case still worse, when you consider in what strong Terms this Charge is laid. I, when I was representing the *Dangers and Inconveniences* of the *Doctrine of Sincerity*, contented my self with saying, that considering the *Tempers and Dispositions* of Men, it *might* have; and would be apt to have such and such *ill Effects*; I never dared to say, nor did I ever think that these *Effects* must certainly, and ~~necessarily~~ follow; yea, I (*i*) expressly declared my self against it. But *Silvius*, without the least Reserve, or Hesitation, declares that (*k*) the *Inconveniences belonging to this Doctrine about Orthodoxy* (I hope he means no *Ridicule* by that Word) are *not ACCIDENTAL, but ESSENTIAL and UNAVOIDABLE*. That it *CAN have no GOOD Effects*, *MAY have many BAD ones, and MUST have SOME SUCH!* Where all this will end, let *Silvius* look to it. For my own part I know not, nor, (God be thanked) did it ever enter into my Heart to suspect such dreadful Consequences.— But *Silvius* has promised to produce them, and he is the fittest Person.

Hear him then (if you can) with Patience. If the *Doctrine about Orthodoxy* (naturally tends to) make Men stupid, indolent, and unconcerned about the Truths of Religion. It often commits them to the Direction of Chance, or something worse. That is to say, Because the *Doctrine about Orthodoxy*, (as he calls it) teaches Men, that their Title to Salvation DEPENDS upon their embracing the Truths of Religion; THEREFORE it naturally tends to make

(*i*) Pref. p. 17. (*k*) P. 28.

*them*

them *Stupid*, *Indolent*, and *Unconcerned* about those *Truths* ! And not only so; but forasmuch as *Silvius* has declared before, that the *Inconveniences* belonging to this *Doctrine* are not *Accidental*, but *Essential* and *Unavoidable*, therefore these Effects must *Essentially*, and *Unavoidably* follow ! But what does *Silvius* mean, when he says that this *Doctrine* commits Men to *Chance*? It commits them, he knows, to the *Word of God*. And is it then *Chance*, whether by the help of *God's Word*, a Man understands those *Truths* relating to *Salvation*, which *Jesus Christ* came to declare ? Why yes ; It is a (*l*) mere *Contingency*; insomuch that if you fix our Title to *Salvation* upon this Foot, (*m*) not one in ten Thousand, (speaking of *Christians*, and supposing them all to be as careful about their *Duty* as they ought to be) CAN be entitled to it ; and it may justly be doubted, whether any *UNINSPIRED Man EVER WAS, or EVER WILL be so* ! He talks of something worse ; if any thing can be worse, here it is. (*n*) *ORTHODOXY*, especially so universal as Mr. *Stebbing* requires, is *SELDOM*, if EVER in a Man's *POWER*, and by consequence it is *UNPROFITABLE*, and *INSIGNIFICANT* to ENDEAVOUR after it. That is, it is seldom, if ever in a Man's Power to understand and believe those *Truths* relating to the *Salvation* of Men, which *Jesus Christ* came to declare, and therefore it is unprofitable, and insignificant to attempt it ! If this be Truth, God have Mercy upon us ! Well might *Silvius* say, that the fixing Men's Title to *Salvation* upon this Foot, (*o*) tends to fill Men's Minds with endless *Inquietudes*, and *Perplexities* ! But till it be proved to be

(*l*) P. 29. (*m*) P. 26. (*n*) P. 29. (*o*) P. 28.

Truth (which as yet is not so much as attempted ; tho' it be confidently affirmed to be (*p*) demonstrable) he shall stand with me as a *Blasphemer* of God's *Holy Word*. He says, that *this Point deserves to be treated of distinctly, and at large* ; and thus far I agree with him, that either he ought to have said a great deal more, or he ought to have said nothing. If *Silvius* thinks it proper to enter upon the Defence of so noble a Cause, let him begin as soon as he pleases. But it will be but just that he tells us his *Name*, that if he cannot (as I hope I need not say, I am perswaded he cannot) make good his *Point*, he may take to himself the *Shame* that belongs to such *Enterprizers*.

What follows, is not less surprizing. He tells me, that (*q*) *it is a sad Prostitution of the Divine Favour, to represent it as following such Qualifications as are ALTOGETHER WORTHLESS.* If it be considered again what those *Qualifications* are, which I have represented the *Divine Favour* as following, you cannot help concluding, that this Writer cares not what it is that he *Prostitutes*. For doth he not therein *reproach HIMSELF*, who hath said so many fine things of *simple, abstracted Truth*? Who hath told us that (*r*) *every Step we take in found Knowledge, may upon the single account of those Improvements it makes of our Faculties, be reckoned a Spiritual Gain, as the Progress we make in Religious Knowledge is a double Gain.* But what is worse, doth he not by this, and by all that he hath now said, *Reproach our Blessed Lord, and his Apostles, who came, and were sent to teach*; and doth he not *Reproach the most Wise,*

(*p*) p. 26. (*q*) p. 29. (*r*) p. 13 14.

and *Holy God*, by whose *Will* and *Appointment* they were sent to Teach that *Faith*, the *Knowledge* whereof he yet declares to be a *Qualification* altogether *Worthless*; which it is a mere *Contingency*, whether a *Man* understands, which *not one in ten Thousand* CAN understand; and which therefore to endeavour to understand, is *unprofitable*, and *insignificant*? See here, my Lord, what an Advocate you have got; and by what *Methods* your *Cause* is to be supported! Was I mistaken, when I told *Silvius* that his Reasoning would bring him at last to downright *Scepticism*? The Gentleman pretends to be a Christian, and without such a Pretence, he could with no sort of Grace have stept forth as a Friend, either to your Lordship, or your Cause. But, my Lord, I speak it with great Seriousness and Concern, whatever Degree of Faith he set out with, he seems in a fair way to lose it all in Pursuit of these Principles.

After this Insult upon the *Gospel*, he again falls upon me, and calls me forth once more to justify my *Interpretation* of the Bishop's *Proposition*. As to this I must beg his Pardon; it is not in my Power to say any thing plainer than I have already said, and if *Silvius* cannot be made to understand plain things, I am sorry for it. The best Advice that I can give him, is to let the Matter rest a while, and give his *Faculties* leave to recover themselves. It is a general Observation, that after much *poring*, the *longer* a *Man* looks, the *worse* he sees; and this seems to be *Silvius's* Case. At first he took the thing right enough, and understood the *Proposition* in every one of those Particulars, which he now quarrels with me about, as I understood it, and as every body else understood it. But now we are quite and clean

asunder,

asunder, and for ought I can perceive, the more closely I should pursue him, the farther I should be off. I took notice of this once before, and *Silvius* has marked me out, as a very *Impertinent*, and *Saucy* Fellow for my Pains. (s) *Nothing*, says he, *can be less to the Purpose than Mr. Stebbing's observing, that SILVIUS is one of those who once supposed, that his Lordship's Proposition did relate.* — 'Tis NO NEWS that SILVIUS once committed a Mistake. — He has done it to my knowledge very often; and is now grown so hardened, that he is not ASHAMED. — I doubt not but the honest Reader will be in hast to congratulate Mr. Stebbing upon his SINGULAR MODESTY in this Particular, as well as some others. Sir, If you be one that a Man may speak to without Offence, I do, with the utmost Deference and Submission to your unknown Excellency, beg leave to represent to you, that it was very much to the Purpose, to observe, that his Lordship's Friends (and especially so considerable an Advocate as SILVIUS) had all of them agreed with me in the Sense of those Particulars, in which his Lordship was pleased to differ from me. Not that I mean to pin you down to your first Sense; no, forasmuch as the Cause requires it, and because I perceive you are some great Man, you shall have the liberty to say, and unsay, to confess, and deny, with Reason, or without Reason, just as you please. You shall moreover be allowed the full Benefit of his Lordship's Pardon, (which it must be owned you have very signally merited) and be permitted to (t) think your self very safe, as knowing that his Lordship (having committed so many Mistakes himself) never uses to con-

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(s) p. 37. (t) p. 38,

damn Men for involuntary Oversight. But then I must beg you would give the Reader leave to infer that this *first Sense*, in which you and all the World besides agreed, is the most *plain* and *obvious Sense*; at least till such time as you shall lay your *Commands* upon us to believe, *that to be the most plain and obvious Sense of a Passage, in which that Passage is least apt to be understood.* If such a Representation as this infers a want of *Modesty*, it is by no means fitting that I should presume to dispute the Point with you anew; and besides there is another Reason which makes it not proper, *viz.* That admitting I had mistaken the Sense of his Lordship's *Proposition*, the *Difference* between us will still be the *same*; his Lordship having even in his *last Performance* acknowledged the *Doctrine* in as full a manner as it was ever charged upon him by me in *Virtue* of his *Proposition*. This I have largely proved in the *Preface* to my *Appeal*; *Silvius* (*u*) confesses the thing, and thinks that *perhaps I had done as wisely to keep it to my self*. Whether (says he) he hath mistaken the *Bishop* or not, 'tis plain enough that he differs from him; and I fear will do while his Lordship continues to publish some sort of *Doctrines*. Here then I rest, whether *wisely*, or not *wisely*, let the Reader judge. But if *Silvius* considers, who 'tis that hath so solemnly acquainted the World, that (*w*) *I could not suffer my self to differ one Hairs breadth from him*, he may, perhaps, find Reason to think that he had done *as wisely*, if he had kept this to himself, unless he thinks that he *pleasures* the *Bishop*, by affording him every Day fresh Occasions to exercise his *Compassion*.

(*u*) p. 38. (*w*) *Common Rights, &c.* p. 117.

But tho' I think it not to the Purpose to enter upon a new Examination of the Bishop's *Proposition*, yet one thing there is which ought to be taken notice of. 'Tis a Thought perfectly new, which *Silvius* is extremely fond of; which he expects will startle me; and which he *cannot imagine how I will fence against*. I had said, and insisted upon it with some Vehemency, that to say, that the *Favour of God equally follows every equal Degree of Sincerity*, can imply no less, than that the Degrees of Favour will be equal, where the Degrees of Sincerity are equal. *Silvius* has a mind to (x) see what *Grounds I have to be so Positive and Resolute in this Matter*, and very gravely sends me to Dr. *Waterland's Vindication*, to find out my Mistake. I have so high an Opinion of the Abilities of that Learned Man, that I am always apt to suspect any Cause against which he is engaged. I was therefore in some Pain for my self till I look'd to the place, where I found my self agreeably surprized with the following Observation, viz. That the Word *equally* has two Senses, and signifies either *as much as*, or *as well as*. Is this all Sir! Alas! You needed not to have sent me to a *Master of Language* for this. Thus much I knew very well before. But I do not yet know, and he must be a *Master of some new Language*, that will tell me, that it is in any one's Liberty to *choose* which of these two Senses he pleases in this place, when the following words do so manifestly *confine us to one of them*. The Bishop doth not say, the Favour of God *equally*

follows EVERY SINCERE MAN, but that it *equally* follows EVERY EQUAL DEGREE OF SINCERITY; which are different things. In the one Case the Word *Equally* may be interpreted, according to the latter Sense, and the Bishop might have been supposed to have meant, that *one* Sincere Man is in God's Favour, *as well as* another. But in the other Case there is a *Necessity* upon us to interpret it according to the *former* Sense, and the whole Passage can imply no less, than that the Favour of God follows every equal Degree of Sincerity *in an equal MEASURE, or PROPORTION.* If you will not yet believe me, put *as well* in the room of *Equally*, and see how the Sentence will run. *The Favour of God follows Sincerity, considered as such, and consequently, AS WELL follows every equal Degree of Sincerity.* Is not this pure Sense? It might have been said consistently, *The Favour of God as well follows one Degree of Sincerity as another.* But when it is said, that it equally follows equal Degrees, the Word *equally* † can admit of no other Sense than that which I have given it. But *Silvius*, I perceive, has an Aversion to my way of (y) dressing, and therefore let him take it in his own. (z) *Of two Christians Sincere IN THE SAME DEGREE, one is blessed with the Favour of God, AS WELL AS the other.* — Away with you for a *Disabler of Criticisms.* Do you not see that the Sentence is redundant! Is there not as

+ In Euclid I read thus; *In circulo æquales rectæ lineæ æquiter distant a Centro.* When my Friend will learn how to construe this; he will, probably, at the same time be able to find out the true Sense of the Bishop's Proposition.

(y) p. 32. (z) p. 35.

much Truth in saying, that of two Christians *Sincere* (whether in the *same Degree*, or not in the *same Degree*) one is blessed with the Favour of God as well as the other? What then have the *Degrees of Sincerity* to do here? Was it, could it be the Bishop's Meaning, to say, that one *Sincere Christian* is in the Favour of God as well as another, if they be all of them *Sincere in the same Degree*? What Pity is it that this Gentleman cannot be prevailed upon to let this Passage alone! 'Tis bad enough as it is, but he is resolved by his *Tinkering* to make it worse. To save his Lordship from a *Slip in Point of Truth*, he cares not if he makes him talk *Nonsense*.

The Reader may take this upon my Word, as an exact *sample* of the rest; or if he has the Curiosity, or thinks the Point of that weight, as that he ought, to make himself *his own Judge*, he may, with a moderate Degree of Attention, do it without any help from me, who am in no manner of Pain about the Determination. There is one Remark more in *Silvius's Book*, which I must just take notice of. The Bishop has been pleased to tell me once, and again, that my Doctrine, which allows a *good Reward* to all *Sincere Men*, is as much liable to certain *Objections* of the *Dean of Chichester*, as his, and particularly that it equally *Sanctifies the Cruelties of an Inquisition*. To which *Silvius* now adds, that it equally *justifies all the Forms of Error and Impiety*, which ever a deluded People, &c. My answer was this; That by *Sanctifying the Cruelties of an Inquisition*, the Dean meant that the *Cruelties of an Inquisition* are the *Holiness of a Christian*, or *Gospel Holiness*, &c. That therefore this Objection lay full against the Bishop's Doctrine, which supposes *Sincerity* to be the whole of *Gospel Holiness*, but

but not at all against mine, which supposes the contrary. To this *Silvius* has found nothing better, than to say,—'Tis all unanswerable, and I desire to be excused from meddling with it. He spoke this in jest, I suppose, but he might as well have said it in good earnest; for the thing is truth, and it will be a vain thing to go about to disprove it. He adds, By the same Rule I suppose, the word JUSTIFYING, in the latter Clause, does not signify a DELIVERANCE from GUILT and CONDEMNATION, as (saith he) Divines used to tell us, but—SOMETHING ELSE, that Mr. Stebbing will acquaint us with another time. You are certainly in the Right, Sir, tho' I perceive you know it not. Justification doth not signify merely a Deliverance from Guilt and Condemnation; and if you would know what that Something is, which it signifies besides, it is, the being accounted, or the being in such a State, as to be accounted, or accepted as RIGHTEOUS before God; which none are, or can be, who have not fulfilled the Law of Righteousness, which is now the Gospel Law, and that only. Thus the Scripture useth this Word, and thus good Divines always use it. If *Silvius* knows of any that have used it in his Sense, they are such Divines as—I need not say who.

And here I end, with letting *Silvius* know that he is not the Man that I at first took him to be. He set out with the Air of a Sober Writer, which (much more than the Weight of his Arguments) was the Reason why I took notice of him. And he has given abundance of good Advice to the Dean of Chichester, to instruct him how to Write Controversy. This gave me a Sight of some Properties in the Man, which I thought not very commendable; yet I thought my self in Charity

Charity bound to hope that it was all well intended ; and I almost promised my self, that he at least would be mindful of his own Rules, and *not Rail*, if he could not Reason. But he has too soon convinced the World, that it is a much more easy thing to advise well, than to do well ; and that this wonderful *Calm* was owing only to this, that nothing had yet happened which had the least tendency to disturb him. 'Tis no News now that *Silvius* can be angry, as well as commit *Mistakes*, and overlook *Distinctions* ; yea, that he can be angry, only because he is told of his *Mistakes*. This is all the *Incivility* he could charge me with ; and for this he has thought fit to set me forth as a Writer of finished *Effrontery* ; quarrels at every thing I say, tho' at the same time, as it should seem by his *Uneasiness*, he likes hardly any thing that he says himself. *Silvius* has given us some Reason to expect, that we may in time hear farther from him. If we shou'd, I will promise him thus much before-hand : that if he offers any thing which I judge to be of Weight, as to the main Point, I shall take care to reply to it, whenever a convenient Opportunity offers its self. This is a piece of Justice due to all Writers ; but if he expects that I should pay the same Regard to his future Performances (unless they should prove of another sort) that I have paid to this, he will find himself to be mistaken. He perhaps may find more Time to spend in Caviling ; but I do assure him I have none left to bestow in attending him.



# A N APPENDIX.

*Containing some Observations upon a Passage in Mr. Sykes's Answer to the Bishop of Oxford, relating to Sincerity.*



R. Sykes having appeared a very zealous Advocate for the Doctrine of *Sincerity*, as lately taught by the Bishop of Bangor; I cannot forbear laying hold of this Opportunity, of making a brief Remark upon a Passage relating to this Subject, which I find in his *Answer to the Bishop of Oxford*. His Lordship had observed that some of the Bishop's \* best Friends, who had taken great

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\* *Defence of the Charge*, p. 29.

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Pains to defend him, and could not want Means to know his true Sentiments, had extended this Doctrine to UNBELIEVERS, as well as others, in such a Sense as to put them all upon the same Foot, with respect to the Rewards of a Life to come, merely in Virtue of their Sincerity; or so as not to allow any Advantage to the one above the other, upon the account of the different Methods of Religion, which they embraced. And for this his Lordship was pleased to do me the Honour to refer his Reader to the Preface to my *Appeal*, where I had produced several of the Bishop's Friends, and amongst the rest Mr. Sykes, who had asserted that a Sincere UNBELIEVER, if he be in OTHER RESPECTS equal to a BELIEVER, will be in as good a Condition as the BELIEVER. To this Mr. Sykes answers; "The Favour of God has been extend-  
" ed by my self, and others to Unbelievers.—  
" But then cannot the Favour of God be equally  
" extended to all Unbelievers, who are equally  
" Sincere, without placing all such Unbelievers in  
" the Joys of that PECULIAR KINGDOM, which  
" Christ has procured for his faithful Subjects,  
" who are, and must be BELIEVERS? Or why  
" must the Comparison be run betwixt Believers  
" and Unbelievers, because the Sincerity of each is  
" the same? Unbelievers that are Sincere, may be  
" in the Favour of God, tho' not admitted to  
" the Joys of Sincere Christians; because the Be-  
" lief in Jesus Christ, is a Capacity which Infidels  
" have not for a PECULIAR DEGREE of Happiness,  
" and the Rewards of God will equally follow e-  
" qual Sincerity, only where every Capacity is e-  
" qual. When therefore your Lordship says,  
" that should any Prince openly profess, that Re-  
" wards should equally follow every equal Degree  
" of Merit, you must presuppose equal Capacities

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" in the Subject, and the Prince able to reward equal Merit in the same Degree equally. If therefore Heathens had equal Capacities, and equal Merit, they would have [their Reward] in the same Degree. But no Man ever said, that they had equal Capacities, and equal Merit, Sincerity alone not being both these. To the Belief of Christ a PECULIAR Reward is promised, which is not promised to them that do not believe. Suppose now Sincerity in a Christian, and in an Unbeliever exactly the same ; yet the PECULIAR PROMISE of Reward made to Belief, sets the Believer in a Station PECULIAR TO HIMSELF. †

I recite this Passage at large, not because I purpose to give it a thorough Examination ; but that I might not leave room for any Reader to suspect, that by suppressing any part of it, I had given a wrong turn to the Sense of the whole. That which I would observe, is only this, that here is a very plain Acknowledgment, that there is a peculiar Kingdom, or a peculiar Reward promised to Believers, which is not promised to Unbelievers, and to which therefore Unbelievers have no Right. The Question therefore, so far as Unbelievers are concerned in it, is entirely given up, and Mr. Sykes must retract his former Assertion, viz. That a Sincere UNBELIEVER, if he be in other RESPECTS equal to a BELIEVER, will be in as good a Condition as the BELIEVER ; for he himself now says, that the PECULIAR PROMISE of Reward made to BELIEF, sets the BELIEVER in a Station PECULIAR to HIMSELF. It was absurd, and

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† Vindication of the Innocency of Error, p. 35, 36.

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Ridiculous in Mr. Sykes, to endeavour to save himself from this Contradiction, by alledging, that the Question presupposes equal Capacities in the Subject, and that no Man ever said, that HEATHENS and CHRISTIANS had EQUAL CAPACITIES. For, i. The Question is, *What are Capacities* qualifying Men for greater Rewards, and therefore it can presuppose no such thing. To ask whether a Sincere Unbeliever is not capable of, or may not qualify himself for as good a Reward as a Sincere Christian, is Sense. But it is Nonsense to enquire, whether supposing the Capacities, or Qualifications in both to be equal, a Sincere Unbeliever is not capable of, or may not qualify himself for as great a Reward, &c. Again, 2. He who affirms, that a Sincere Unbeliever, if he be in other Respects equal to a Believer, will be in as good a Condition as the Believer, does thereby directly exclude FAITH from being of the number of those Capacities, or Qualifications, which will entitle a Man to a greater Reward, and confines them wholly to those other Respects, which, as I have elsewhere observed, and as is very evident, are according to Mr. Sykes, their Moral Improvements. But now Mr. Sykes expressly declares, that the Belief in Jesus Christ is a Capacity, which because Infidels have not, they may therefore not be admitted to the Joys of Sincere Christians; which (even according to his own Way of Reasoning) is the same thing, as to say, that they may not be admitted to the same Degrees of Reward with Sincere Christians.

It is a vain thing therefore for Mr. Sykes to endeavour to reconcile these Concessions with his former Assertion. But I am glad to find that Reason can at last be heard upon any Terms; and since this Gentleman is got thus far, I must desire

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desire him to try if he cannot go a little farther. He is brought at last, you see to found Men's Title to the *Gospel Rewards*, where I have founded it, and where it ought to be founded, viz. upon *Gospel-Promise*. For he therefore supposes that *Sincere Unbelievers* may not be partakers of these *Rewards*, because they are not promised to them. Let him now consider upon what Conditions the *Gospel* promises *Salvation*, even to *Believers*, and see if he can find any greater Provision made to such among them (if such indeed may be called *Believers*) as do not hold that *Faith* which the *Gospel* declares, or do not practice those *Duties* which it commands, than is made for *Unbelievers*. If he cannot (and I am verily persuaded he cannot) he will then be obliged in Vertue of his own Reasoning, to exclude these from any Title to those *Rewards*, as well as the other.—But these perhaps he will say \* are trifling Researches; and he may say so, if he pleases. But for my own part, I hope I shall always have more just and decent Apprehensions of that *Gospel*, which was promulgated for the *Salvation* of Men, than to esteem it a trifling thing, to enquire upon what Terms that *Salvation* is promised. And why Mr. Sykes, setting this Enquiry aside, should point it out to us as the real Controversy, which he should rejoice to see clearly stated, viz. How far bare Error, the Result of Search and Industry, will throw a Man QUITE out of the Favour of God, and make him obnoxious to his WRATH; for this, I say, I am able to give no other account, than that he himself hath written a great deal upon

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\* *Ibid.* p. 36, 37.

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this latter Question, and finds nothing to say upon the former. The one is a Point in which he will meet with no Adversaries ; and the other will find him more work than he can tell how to go through with. This may probably be the Reason which determined Mr. Sykes in his *Choice of the real Controversy* ; and I cannot but own, that when a Man is forced to part with any thing against his Will, there is some Policy in endeavouring to flatter himself into an Opinion, that it signifies nothing.

F I N I S.

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A N Appeal to the Word of God for the Terms of Christian Salvation : Or a Discourse, Proving that SINCERITY, exclusive of the Method of Religion which a Man follows, is not sufficient to entitle him to the Kingdom of Heaven. With a Preface, in which is contained a Reply to such of the Lord Bishop of Bangor's Answer to the Reverend the Dean of Worcester's Sermon, and of his Postscript in answer to the Lord Bishop of Oxford, as relates to this Subject. By HENRY STEBBING, M. A. Rector of Rickinghall in Suffolk, and late Fellow of St. Catharine's-Hall in Cambridge.

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